

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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NSCE-00 INRE-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 MC-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 NIC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8928

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 5948

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, BE

SUBJECT: BELGIAN REACTION TO MIDDLE EAST

1. BELGIAN PRESS CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE BIG POWER ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST, CITING DANGER OF ESCALATION. SOVIETS SEEN AS IRRESPONSIBLE IN INITIATING MASSIVE RESUPPLY OF ARABS BUT PRESS UNCLEAR AS TO SEQUENCE AND TIMING OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO US DECISION TO RESUPPLY ISRAEL. PRESS HAS WIDELY INTERPRETED PRESIDENT'S REMARKS ON MIDDLE EAST OCTOBER 15 AS INDICATION THAT US READY TO INTERVENE MILITARILY IN MIDDLE EAST. (EGYPTIAN EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER CALLED EMBOFF OCTOBER 16 WITH REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON PRESIDENT'S "DECISION TO INTERVENE". EMBOFF GAVE HIM TEXT OF PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT AND BRIEFED HIM ON REMARKS BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN OCTOBER 15. EMBOFF ALSO REVIEW STATEMENT AND SPOKESMAN'S REMARKS FOR FONOFF DIRECTOR ME AFFAIRS.)

2. PRESS FULL OF MIDDLE EAST NEWS, WITH MAJOR PAPERS MAINTAINING OWN CORRESPONDENTS IN COUNTRIES ON BOTH SIDES OF CONFLICT. IN REGARD TO BELGIUM'S RELATIONS WITH MIDDLE EAST, PRESS IN LAST

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FEW DAYS HAS CARRIED REPORTS OF GOB DECISION TO SUSPEND ARMS

SALES AND OF BELGIAN DENIAL THAT RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS FOR ISRAEL TAKING PLACE HERE. REPORT ON SUSPENSION OF ARMS EXPORTS CARRIED OCTOBER 15-16 IN TANDEM WITH REPORT FROM "ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST ARMS SHIPMENTS" ACCORDING TO WHICH SEVERAL SHIPS FLYING LIBERIAN FLAG HAVE BEEN DETOURED FROM REGULAR ROUTES AND EXPECTED SHORTLY TO PICK UP MUNITIONS AT BELGIAN PORT OF ZEEBRUGGE. SHIP NAMED "DIAMOND" SAID ALREADY TO HAVE LOADED CARGO OCTOBER 11. REPORTS SAY MUNITIONS ORIGINATE AT "NATO DEPOT" AT ZEDELGEM. (FYI. USNATO HAS INFORMED US THAT THERE IS NO NATO INSTALLATION AT ZEDELGEM. THERE IS, HOWEVER, BELGIAN ARMY-NAVY AMMUNITIONS DEPOT LOCATED THERE. END FYI.) EMBASSY SO FAR HAS BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ON REPORTED SHIPMENTS.

3. NUMEROUS COMMITTEES DEFENDING OPPOSING SIDES IN MIDDLE EAST HAVE ISSUED COMMUNIQUE OF SUPPORT HERE SINCE OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING BUT CONFLICT HAS NOT YET BECOME REAL ISSUE IN BELGIAN POLITICS. BRUSSELS ALSO HAS BEEN SITE OF SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS. THOSE DRAWING MOST ATTENTION WERE CLASHES LAST WEEK BETWEEN ARAB AND ISRAELI STUDENTS AT BRUSSELS UNIVERSITY AND PRO-ARAB MARCH OF SOME 2000 ARABS AND SYMPATHIZERS THROUGH WORKING CLASS DISTRICT OCTOBER 14. LATTER DEMONSTRATORS, UNDER LEADERSHIP OF NATIONAL PALESTINE COMMITTEE OF BELGIUM, DISTRIBUTED TRACT CLAIMING FEDAYEEN HAVE LAUNCHED SERIES OF ATTACKS AGAINST ISRAELI FORCES SINCE OCTOBER 6. BOOCHEVER

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